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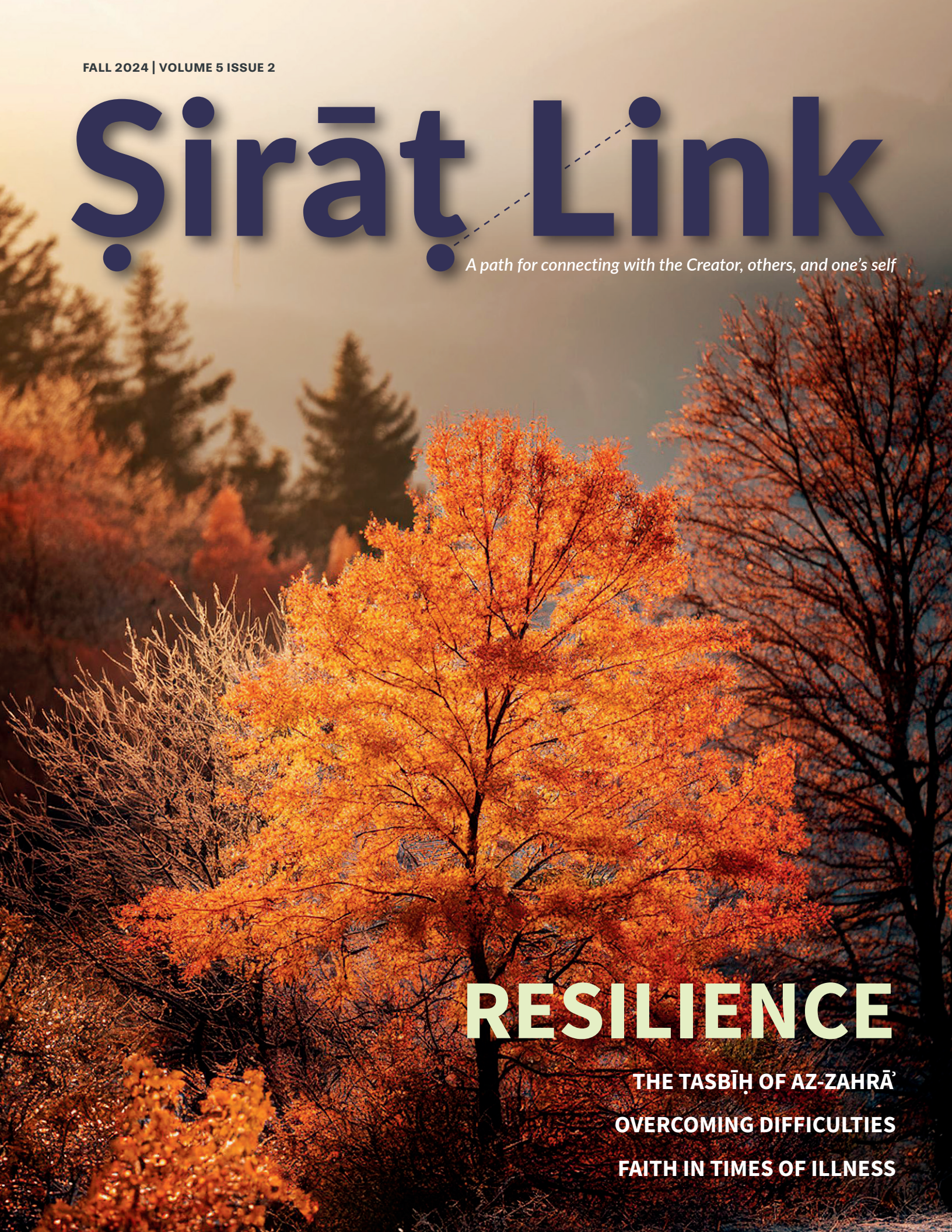
Ṣirāṭ Link

A path for connecting with the Creator, others, and one's self



RESILIENCE

THE TASBĪḤ OF AZ-ZAHRĀʾ

OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES

FAITH IN TIMES OF ILLNESS

Letter from MOULANA ABIDI

Salāmun ʿalaykum,

May Allah (swt) bless you and your families. Our sincerest condolences to the Imām of our time, Imām Mahdī (ʿaj), our great marājiʿ and scholars, the Muslim Ummah, and all the believers on the commemoration of Sayyidah Fāṭimah's (ʿa) shahādah (martyrdom).

The months of Jumādā al-Ūlā and Jumādā al-Ukhrā are the months of preparation and purification. These two months are the foundational months in which one has the opportunity to remove impurities from within oneself in order to attain higher spiritual levels. These months are considered full of immense goodness due to the birth and martyrdom of Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) falling within them. She is a mercy for the Noble Prophet (ṣ), who himself was a mercy for all creation. She was a mercy to him because she was considered a source of goodness from Allah (swt); it is said that if Allah (swt) wanted to create all the beauty and goodness in the form of a person, it would be Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa).

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Ṣirāṭ Link

A 2nd Chance Books Publication

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ
مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

For the love of Him, they feed the needy, the orphan, and the prisoner.

(Noble Qurʾān 76:8)

2nd Chance Books is a non-profit organization that was founded in order to assist incarcerated Muslims by providing them with educational materials, tools for rehabilitation, and a support system. By responding to their numerous questions about Islam, they gain a more thorough understanding of the religion. So far, 2nd Chance has distributed over 20,000 books to inmates across the country.

Among 2nd Chance's most recent initiatives is Ṣirāṭ Link, a quarterly magazine. The title Ṣirāṭ Link, inspired by the Arabic term Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm which means the right path, presents this magazine as a means of guidance for a better connection to Allah (swt), as well as offering the opportunity for connections with the broader community, and the improvement of one's self. Inshāʾ Allāh it can also serve as an opportunity for growing one's faith through education.

This magazine will be under the guidance and oversight of Moulana Nabi Raza Mir Abidi, Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Center, and several other scholars and experts.

Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) is a role model for us in various aspects of life. When she stood up for the wilāyah (vicegerency) of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), she showed us the importance of standing for ḥaqq (truth). When she sacrificed herself, her home, and her children, she showed us how to give in the way of Allah (swt). When she cared for her family and cultivated an exemplary home environment, she showed us the beauty of building a strong family system. Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) devoted her life to God-consciousness in all circumstances and was happy and content with Allah's decisions.

Indeed, amongst her many significant roles was her lofty role of being a mother to two Imāms (ʿa). From her, we learn about the honor and nobility that comes with the title of "mother," the heart of the household. A mother is truly a source of blessings and barakah; as our ḥadīth tells us, Heaven lies under her feet. During these special days, we remember the best of mothers, and we must give our mothers the proper honor and respect for which they are worthy. If we cannot meet with our mothers, whether we are separated from them by time or space, then reading the Noble Qurʾān on their behalf and giving the reward to them is another way to serve them.

We pray that Allah (swt) gives us the tawfīq to fulfill our duties and responsibilities toward our parents, and our youth, the future generation of ambassadors of Islam in all parts of the world.

JazākAllāh Khayran and Best Wishes,

Nabi R. Mir (Abidi)

Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Islamic Center

SIGNIFICANT DAYS

Islamic Date	Event	Gregorian Date*
FOR THE MONTH OF RABĪʿ AL-AWWAL		
8th	Death Anniversary of Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (ʿa)	September 12th, 2024
17th	Birth Anniversary of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) and Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa)	September 21st, 2024
FOR THE MONTH OF RABĪʿ AL-ĀKHIR		
8th	Birth Anniversary of Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (ʿa)	October 12th, 2024
FOR THE MONTH OF JUMĀDĀ AL-ŪLĀ		
5th	Birth Anniversary of Sayyidah Zaynab (ʿa)	November 7th, 2024
FOR THE MONTH OF JUMĀDĀ AL-ĀKHIRAH		
3rd	Death Anniversary of Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa)	December 5th, 2024
20th	Birth Anniversary of Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa)	December 22nd, 2024

*Please note the above Gregorian dates are only estimates; as these dates are subject to change based on moon-sighting, since the Islamic dates are according to the lunar calendar.

OVERCOMING

Difficulties

By Shaykh Mateen Charbonneau

One of a believer's characteristics is being resilient in the face of adversity. We must know that adversity and trials are not anomalies but part and parcel of life, as Allah (swt) says in many places in the Qurʾān that He (swt) will certainly test us. This reassurance should prepare us to face our trials with resilience.

It's important to remember that these trials are not punishments but opportunities to draw closer to Allah (swt). By facing them with a positive attitude, we demonstrate our faith and open ourselves to the countless rewards from Allah (swt), including a closer relationship with Him—our Creator.

Imām al-Hādī (ʿa) said: *"And whoever is on clear guidance from his Lord, the misfortunes of this world will seem light to him, even if they were to engulf him. Indeed, Allah (swt) has made the world a place of trials and the Hereafter a place of consequences. He made the trials of the world a means for the reward of the Hereafter, and the reward of the Hereafter as compensation for the trials of the world."* [1]

We must remember the tragedies and the struggles that our Imāms faced. When we recall the dungeon that Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa) was imprisoned in and how he was basically living in a hole in the ground, our situation is nothing compared to that. When we lose a loved one, we remember Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and the fact that he lost all of his friends and loved ones before his very eyes in one day, on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ.

This life is full of trials for those who believe, and it indicates that Allah (swt) loves you because Allah (swt) tests those whom He loves. These tests help build the foundation of our resilience and faith.

Imām al-Bāqir (ʿa) said: *"Two angels who were descending from the heavens to the Earth met each other. One asked the other about his mission. He said: 'God gave me the mission to go to sea to force a fish to go to one of the oppressors so he, who had wished to catch it, would be able to do so. So, I must force that fish in the sea towards him so the oppressor can catch it and achieve his last goal.' The other angel said: 'My divine mission is even stranger than yours. God gave me the mission to go to a fasting believer who stays up at night to worship God. He is such a good worshiper that he is famous in the heavens. I am supposed to turn over the pan of food he has just prepared for breaking his fast since God wants to test his faith this way.'"* [2]

When we see the oppressors living a good, luxurious life, we know that it is because they will only get their ease here but will face hardships in the next life, whereas a believer will suffer difficulties in this life and receive his rewards in the next life. There is a condition to this: he remains patient in the face of adversity. We should never complain about the trials we face and instead face them with resilience, knowing that these are divine tests for which we will be rewarded handsomely.

We must submit to the will of Allah (swt) (*taslīm*). This submission requires us to fight against our lower self (*jihad an-nafs*) in order to do the right thing. So, what will we do the next time we face temptation? When you are offered alcohol or drugs, will you submit to Allah (swt) and reject them, or will you give in to your lower desire? When a person from the opposite gender makes a pass at you, will you get involved in an illicit relationship, or will you fear Allah (swt) like Prophet Yūsuf (ʿa) did? When life becomes difficult, and you lose what you worked hard for, will you complain against Allah (swt), or will you be patient like Prophet Ayyūb (ʿa)? When your family turns against you for the sake of following the truth, will

1 *Fī Riḥāb A'immat Ahl al-Bayt*, Vol. 4, P. 180
2 Shaykh Ṭabarsī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār fī Ghurar al-Akhbār*, P. 289

it break you, or will you stand firm like the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) when his uncles turned against him? We must work on ourselves rigorously so our actions are aligned with the teachings of the Qurʾān and Ahlul-Bayt (ʿa). [3]

When we speak about submission, we must realize that whatever Allah (swt) has prescribed for us to do through the Qurʾān, the words of His messenger (ṣ), or the 12 Imāms (ʿa) is the best method of doing things. We must make their words and instructions the template for our lives. The One who created us knows what is best for us, and this is what we must submit to. If we do this, then we will be successful in this life as well as the next.

We see in the tragedy of Karbalāʾ the great sacrifice and submission to Allah (swt) in the example of the reaction of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) when his infant son ʿAlī al-Aṣghar was slaughtered in his arms. After that painful martyrdom of his infant son, Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) has been quoted to have said: *"What makes all these hardships easy for me is the fact that all of this has happened in the presence of God."* [4]

He held his six-month-old baby, his youngest son ʿAlī al-Aṣghar, in his arms and asked the enemy for some water for the baby. The Imām (ʿa) wanted to awaken their conscience and stir their human feelings, but the enemies had no humanity left. Their hearts were covered with the rust of sins, their stomachs were filled with the forbidden (*ḥarām*), and they were like beasts.

Instead of giving him water, Harmalah pulled out an arrow and shot it at the child. The arrow pierced the baby's neck. It not only pierced his neck, but it severed his head![5] He was martyred while in the arms of his father. Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) was shocked. He felt an unbearable wave of pain. The sight of the limp baby in his arms was unbearable.

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) filled his hand with the blood of the baby and threw it to the skies, and Imām Bāqir (ʿa) said, *"Not a drop of it fell."*

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) then said, *"What eases what I have experienced is that he is cared for by Allah. O Allah! Do not let the one who killed him go unpunished, as you did not leave the one who killed the baby camel of Ṣāleḥ go unpunished. O my Lord! If you kept victory away from us, then make it for what is to come for us better, and seek revenge for us from the oppressors. Make what is happening to us now a reward for us in the future. O Allah! You are the Witness of the people who killed the one who most resembles the Messenger of Allah (ṣ)."*

He then heard a voice saying, *"O Ḥusayn! Indeed, there is a nursing mother for him in Paradise."* [6]

We witness the greatest example of submission, patience, and steadfastness in Karbalāʾ. This is one of many tragedies to befall the members of the Noble Household of the Prophet (ṣ). If there are moments we feel down and need to reframe our perspectives and gain a better understanding of how to overcome difficulties, we can always reflect upon the lives of the Infallibles (ʿa).

3 The Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa), Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), and the 11 Imāms (ʿa) from their progeny.
4 Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Al-Luhūf*, P. 117
5 Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, *Nafas al-Mahmūm*
6 Abdul-Razzaq al-Muqarram, *The Epic Martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn*, Vol. 2, Pp. 127-130

The Tasbīḥ of az-Zahrā'

By Melanie Raza

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) said: *"The tasbīḥ of Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) is from the 'abundant dhikr' in which Allah, the Almighty, says, 'Remember Allah with abundant remembrance.'"* (Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:41).[1]

We are often told to perform the *tasbīḥ* (praise or glorification; can be used to refer to the act of remembrance of Allah (swt)) immediately after performing the daily prayers. After the last *Allāhu Akbar* of prayer, we sit on our prayer mats, take out a string of 99 beads, and say *Allāhu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest) 34 times, *alḥamdulillāh* (all praise is for Allah) 33 times, and finally *subḥānallāh* (all glory belongs to Allah) 33 times without really contemplating on what we are doing. We say it so quickly that the words blur together, and we might even be thinking about what will be for dinner or the conversations we had earlier in the day. We are more excited to fold up our prayer mat and carry out the rest of our responsibilities than the *tasbīḥ* between our fingertips. Unfortunately, this is the *tasbīḥ* of mindlessness and neglect. The *tasbīḥ* of az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) is supposed to be one of devotion and consciousness. By revisiting the story and true meaning of the tasbīḥ, we can reform our intentions and walk in the real footsteps of Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) and the Ahlul Bayt (ʿa).

As any other wife and mother, Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) had housework to accomplish, children to take care of, meals to cook, and a community to look after. She was overwhelmed by the sheer number of responsibilities on her plate, and she turned to her father, Rasūlullāh (ṣ), for comfort and assistance. She confided in Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), and she humbly requested a maid to help her with her responsibilities. Instead of a maid, he granted her something better.

The Prophet (ṣ) said to Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa):

"Shall I teach you something which would be better for you than having a servant?" [2]

Although the *tasbīḥ* was not what she initially asked for, Sayyidah Fāṭimah(ʿa) learned the *tasbīḥ* and said to her father: *"I am pleased with Allah and His messenger."*[3] She did not waste any time being confused, frustrated, or upset. Instead, she returned to her prayer mat and trusted in the guidance of the Prophet (ṣ).

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) prescribed the *tasbīḥ* to boost her mood and to remind his daughter of her inner strength–the source of it being Allah (swt). When we perform the *tasbīḥ*, it is a reminder of all the beautiful things inside of our hearts. Most importantly, the beauty inside of us is the reflection of Allah's power inside us. Everything in creation performs the *tasbīḥ*, and it is our choice to be mindful of this gift Allah (swt) has given us or to disregard it without taking advantage of its benefits.

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) said: *"Allah has not been worshiped by any kind of praise better than the tasbīḥ of Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa). Had anything been a better gift, the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) would have instead presented that to [Lady] Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa)."* 4

There are a myriad of spiritual benefits to performing the tasbīḥ with purpose. When we say the words, Allāhu Akbar, we are testifying to the greatness of Allah (swt). He is greater than ourselves, and He is greater than anything we can imagine. When you say *alḥamdulillāh*, you are praising Him. Think about all the good things you have.

1 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 500, Ḥadīth #4
2 *Man lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, Vol. 1, P. 320-321, Ḥadīth #947
3 Ibid.
4 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 3, P. 343, Ḥadīth #14

Count them all on your fingertips until you reach 33 things you are grateful for. Thank Allah (swt) for each blessing He has given to you. Every time we say *subḥānallāh*, glorify Him for everything you already have. Look around yourself at everything He (swt) has given you, and say *subḥānallāh* until your heart feels the weight of its blessings and your burdens become lighter on your shoulders. To further illustrate how to perform the tasbīḥ with intentionality, let's imagine how Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) used the *tasbīḥ* her father gave to her.

With each *Allāhu Akbar*, how did Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) testify to Allah's greatness?

ALLĀHU AKBAR.

Perhaps she thought of the greatness of all the prophets who came before her father. How Allah(swt) blew His spirit into Prophet Ādam (ʿa), how Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) built an arch to save the faithful from the flood, how Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) sacrificed Prophet Ismāʿīl (ʿa), how Prophet Mūsā (ʿa) parted the Red Sea, how Prophet ʿĪsā (ʿa) raised the dead, and how her father journeyed to paradise during Miʿrāj.

Allāhu Akbar. Perhaps she thought of the beauty of Rasūlullāh's voice whispering these words in her ears for the first time at her birth.

Allāhu Akbar. Perhaps she thought of the heavy weight of these words as they rang through the air of Medina each time the *adhān* was called.

Allāhu Akbar. Perhaps she thought of how nothing is greater than Allah (swt) Himself, and she asked Him to help her better understand its meaning.

With each *alḥamdulillāh*, what did she praise Allah (swt) for?

ALḤAMDULILLĀH.

Perhaps she thought of how her father Rasūlullāh (ṣ) would praise Allah (swt) endlessly throughout every trial he faced.

Alḥamdulillāh. Perhaps she thought of how Allah(swt) gave her a family whom Allah (swt) had chosen as His representatives. Her father Muḥammad (ṣ) was the prophet of God, her husband ʿAlī (ʿa) the first Imām, and her two sons Ḥasan (ʿa) and Ḥusayn (ʿa) were the second and third Imāms after him.

Alḥamdulillāh. Perhaps she thought of the memory of her blessed mother, Khadījah, and the sacrifices she made for Islam to prosper.

Alḥamdulillāh. Perhaps she thought of how her daughter Zaynab would be there for her brother Ḥusayn (ʿa) on the day that he would need her the most.

With each *subḥānallāh*, what did she glorify Allah (swt) for?

SUBḤĀNALLĀH.

Perhaps she thought of the glory of the mountains of Medina or the caves of Mecca that were formed without ever having been constructed. Be, and it was!

Subḥānallāh. Perhaps she thought of the perfection of the moon and its seamless rotation around the earth.

Subḥānallāh. Perhaps she thought of how the night turns into the day without any interruption.

Subḥānallāh. Perhaps she thought to herself, who is the cause of all this except Allah (swt)?

This is the *tasbīḥ* of az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) and one we should try our best to emulate.

In summary, when we think about the *tasbīḥ*, we have to remind ourselves that it is not meant to be a chore or burden, but it is supposed to alleviate our burdens and make our chores easy for us.

This article continues on page 15

Words of Light

1. Patience - صَبْر - Ṣabr
2:45

3. Forbidding evil - نَهْيٌ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ - Nahy ʿanil munkar
31:17

2. Encouraging good - اَمْرٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ - Amr bil maʿrūf
31:17

4. Certainty - يَقِين - Yaqīn
30:60

Steadfastness - الِاستِقَامَة - Al-Istiqāmah

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا ٱللهُ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَقَـٰمُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِٱلْجَنَّةِ ٱلَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ

"Surely those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, saying, 'Do not fear, nor grieve. Rather, rejoice in the good news of Paradise, which you have been promised.'"

Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41), Verse 30

5. Justice - عَدَالَة - ʿAdālah
16:90

6. Seeking help - اِستِعَانَة - Istiʿānah
2:45

7. Righteousness - بِرّ - Birr
2:44
8. God-consciousness - تَقْوَى - Taqwā
3:200
9. Perseverant - صَبُور - Ṣabūr
3:146
10. Trust in Allah - تَوَكُّل عَلَى ٱللهِ - Tawakkul ʻala-llāh
27:79
11. Strength - قُوَّة - Quwwah
30:54
12. Supplication - دُعَاء - Duʻā'
2:186
13. Faith - إِيمَان - Īmān
3:173
14. The Devout - اَلْعَٰبِدُونَ - al-ʻĀbidūn
9:112
15. The Penitent - اَلتَّٰٓئِبُونَ - at-Tā'ibūn
9:112
16. The one who prostrates (in prayer) - اَلسَّٰجِدُونَ - as-Sājidūn
9:112
17. Knowledge - عِلْم - ʻilm
3:18
18. Guidance - هِدَايَة - Hidāyah
2:120
19. Submission - تَسْلِيم - Taslīm
6:71
20. Doers of good (The virtuous) - اَلْمُحْسِنِينَ - al-Muḥsinīn
2:195
21. Repentance - تَوبَة - Tawbah
9:104
22. The Successful - اَلْمُفْلِحُونَ - al-Mufliḥūn
23:102

Acceptance of faith in times of Illness

PART 1

The following article is the first of a five-part series specially curated for our Ṣirāṭ Link audience. The content of this article was pulled from a guide developed by the entity Kisa Family of Al-Kisa Foundation, written by Sister Kulsoom Ahsan, titled Proactive Faith in Times of Illness: How to Live Well with a Chronic Illness or Disability. Given the limitations of space, the editors have pared down the material of the original text without compromising the integrity of the content. We pray you find the content beneficial and a good reminder on the potential of resilience of the human spirit.

"And He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. It is all a favor and kindness from Him. Indeed there are signs in it for people who think deeply." [1]

So many people are lost in a fog of chronic illness, pain, and disability. Some have a mystery ailment that leaves them stuck in the world of the unhealthy-unsick. Still others have a serious diagnosis that puts them one complication away from danger. It's a sadly impressive reality that, thanks to modern medicine, someone can have a life-threatening illness but look perfectly fine.

Whatever your persistent health condition may be, the stress that comes with it can be overwhelming, and what we want is relief from the mental and emotional toll. Illness and other hardships reveal how reliant we are on Allah (swt) and His Infinite Mercy. Everything is through the Will of Allah (swt), including whether or not we get better. But Allah (swt) has made a natural order of things through which we can utilize coping and problem-solving skills. Allah (swt) has given us the means of building up our resilience, courage, hope, independence, and trust in Him. These are all Mercies and Blessings from Allah (swt), and He wants us to use them.

"I wonder at the person who urgently searches for that which he has lost, but he has lost his soul [self] and is not searching for it." [2] - Imām ʿAlī (ʿa)

1 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Jāthiyah (45), Verse 13.
2 *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, Vol. 6, P. 141, Ḥadīth #11911

Chronic illness and disability can lead us to lose our true selves in the quest to find our lost health. In the book *Self-Knowledge* by Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali, the discussion makes it clear that the self is our soul self. It is not the physical self that is present in this world. From this we can realize that our physical health is part of and limited to our physical self. Losing our physical health does not have to limit our true self if we take the right steps. Interestingly enough, there is a poem addressing the sickness of the soul. This poem, attributed to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), ends with:

"Therefore you have no need to look beyond yourself. What you seek is within you, if only you reflect." [3]

Chronic illness and chronic pain have a way of completely redefining and shrinking us if we are not careful. Either we push everything aside in a dogged quest for a cure or diagnosis, or we drop everything and vanish into the cave of despair.[4] We stop living life as it is meant to be lived to the best of our ability with the circumstances we are dealt. When that happens, there isn't much between us and severe depression and despair. You might look in the mirror and not recognize yourself anymore. Before you can do anything to help yourself live your best in illness or pain, you need to be yourself again. You are not your health, so losing your health doesn't mean losing yourself. You still have purpose and value and must reconnect with these elements of yourself to find your way in life and manage your health.

To find your soul self and separate yourself from your illness, you need to take stock of who you are. What do you have in you that makes your life good or can make your life good?

Make lists of your strengths, weaknesses, skills, interests, and what things you gravitate towards or that make you happy. You want to build a clear picture of yourself to fall back on whenever the fog of illness makes you forget yourself.

If we willingly face hardships, including illness, pain, and disability, then we do not aggravate them in the way Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) warned against. If we endure the difficulties that are a part of life, we make peace with reality and peace with the Will of Allah (swt). Resisting reality does not change it. Accepting reality won't change it either, but it will be a conscious choice we make, thus giving us the clarity to assess what is in our control and then act on it and see the result. And the results are very encouraging and strengthening.

The first step to accepting illness or any hardship is to remind ourselves that it is a test from Allah (swt) and that He wants the best for us. It is good to remind ourselves that everyone is tested throughout life because it is a natural part of the human condition as Allah (swt) has designed it. In the Noble Qur'ān, we are told:

"We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits; and give good news to the patient." [5]

This acceptance is founded on *tawakkul*, trust in Allah (swt) and his plan for us. When our scholars talk about *tawakkul*, they mention one of the names of Allah, *al-Wakīl*.[6] A Wakīl is someone that you can entrust with your affairs. You would entrust your wakīl in all matters, such as the care of property, legal representation, and financial responsibilities, among other things.

We are servants of Allah (swt), yet He has promised us that He is our Wakīl and that we can fully entrust Him with all of our needs and hopes.[7] As our Wakīl, Allah is our Custodian[8] and our Protector.[9] If we trust Allah (swt) with all of our worldly matters, then we can learn to accept the challenges and outcomes that He puts before us. Treat your illness like a hands-on education in acceptance and *tawakkul*.

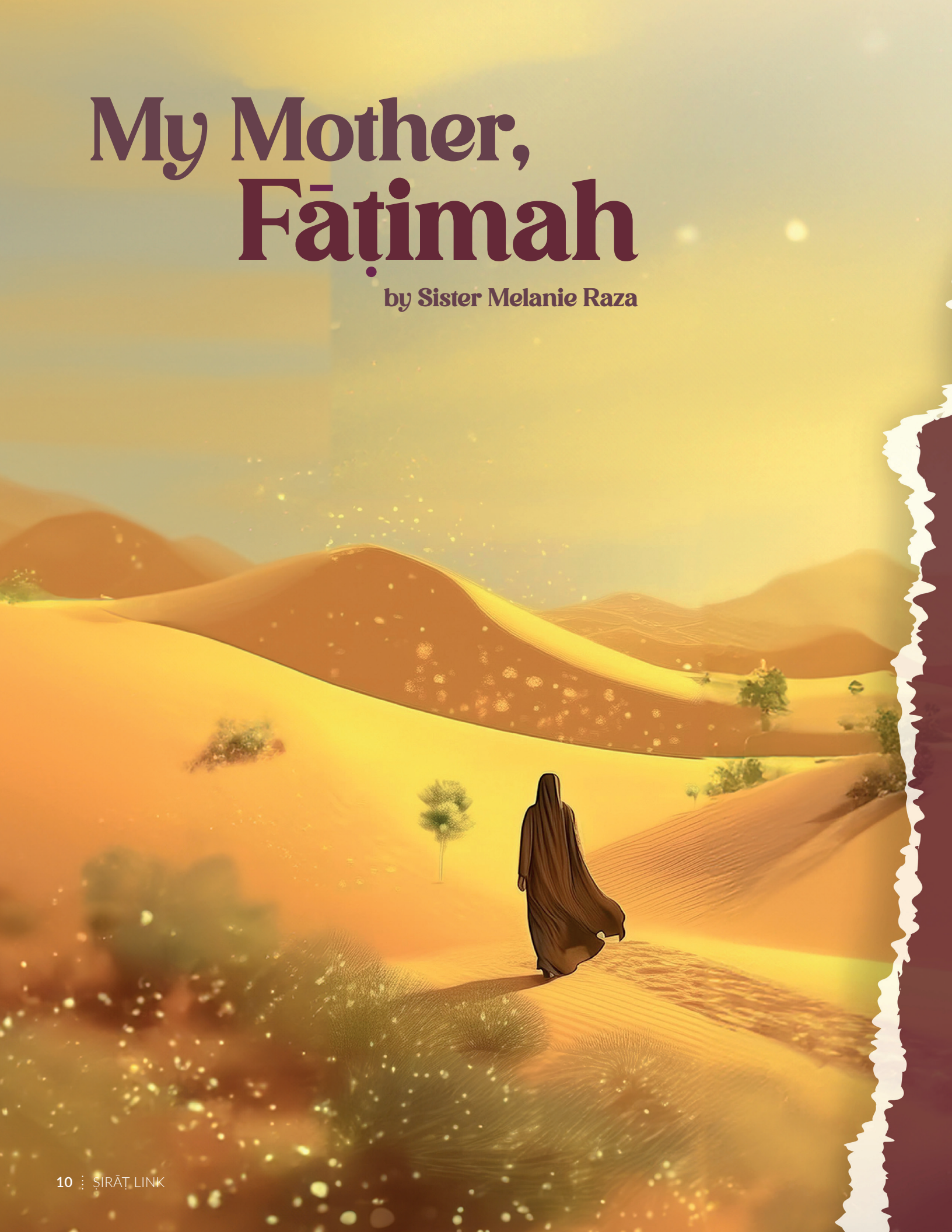
It may or may not become clear right away. But never give up on Allah (swt), and never give up on yourself. Just as Allah (swt) tells us to always be hopeful of His Mercy, we should always be hopeful of a better tomorrow. This is faith, and faith is something we not only feel but also do. Islam is a religion of study and application. Just keep going to the best of your ability with gentility and understanding.

What are your strengths and weaknesses, skills, interests? What makes you happy?

3 Mohammad Ali Shomali, *Self-Knowledge*, Second Edition (Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), Diwan Amir Al-Mu'minin, P. 175, as mentioned in the book *Insan Kamil*)
4 Craig K. Svensson, *When There Is No Cure: How to Thrive While Living with the Pain and Suffering of Chronic Illness.*
5 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 155.
6 Sayed Hussain Makke, *DAY 69: Tawakkul In Allah: What Does It Mean?*, youtube.com
7 Sayed Mohammed Baqer Al-Qazwini, *What Does Tawakkul (Reliance on God) Really Mean?*, youtube.com
8 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 12.
9 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Muzzammil (73), Verse 9.

My Mother, Fāṭimah

by Sister Melanie Raza



The Prophet's last promise to his daughter
This world will not last much longer

Soon you will leave this world of vice
You will be the first to join me in paradise

As daughter cradles father
Her face reflects his honor

His soul a mirror
Her death nearer

When she hears the knock of death grow louder
Her heart grows calmer as flowers grow around her

The loss of her father is stronger
Than the pain of her ribs

She remembers,
This world will not last much longer

ʿAlī cleanses her body
Her pain under his protection
His fingers graze over her broken ribs
His screams mixed with her silence
Tears mix with the water
That pours from the fountain of Kawthar

At last she meets her father
His grave freshly watered
With the tears of Zahrāʾ

Centuries later
When I hear this story
The pain only grows stronger

Centuries later
When I hear this story
I want to cover my ears
Like a child
I cannot bear to hear this news

Like a child
I fold over

Like a child
I cannot control my emotions
Like a child
I sob
Like a child
Limbs flailing

Like a child
My body has a mind of its own
Like a child
I call out for my mother,
Yā Fāṭimah!

Like a mother
She calls out to me

Like a mother
She calls out to me
Come! Come!

Like a mother
She comforts me

Like a mother
She comforts me
No matter what I've done

Like a mother
She waits for me to express my love

Like a mother
She loves me unconditionally

Like a child
I place conditions
On what it means to love
A woman so great
Unlike any other mother

Like a mother
She is patient
She guides me toward her
Her arms are already open

In her arms
I wish to stay here forever

In her arms
I wish to stay here forever

For how can I say farewell?
How do you say goodbye
To your own heart

Instead I'll leave it safe in your hands
That way you'll have to call me back
To return what belongs to you anyway
For now, I'll live in your name
Until we meet again

The Root of Sin

Question: **What is the root of all sins?**

Answer:

Based on the teachings of the Noble Qur'ān and ḥadīth, our great scholars of ethics (*akhlāq*) have derived the main roots of sins and the decline of man to the following three things: desires of the inner self (*nafs*), the love of this world, and Shayṭān. To elaborate a bit further on this:

1. Desires of the inner self, temptations, jealousy, and arrogance:

Allah (swt) created human beings with two tendencies: they will either be inclined to do good or to do bad. The inner self (*nafs*) is inclined to overindulge in natural human instincts and will many times cause a person to be led by carnal desires, and then execute these carnal desires in an Islamically unlawful manner. It is this facet of the inner self that is the source of immorality and sin. Prophet Yūsuf (ʿa) sought refuge in Allah (swt) from the harm of this part of human nature where he said: *"And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy."* [1]

2. Attachment and excessive love for this world and limiting our vision of life to only this world:

One ḥadīth states: *"The source of all sin is the love of this world."* [2] There is no issue with the fact that the life of this world plays a key role for Allah's creations. Based on the divine will of Allah (swt), the life of this world is the best of systems to help us create our hereafter. The main problem is the type of relationship that humankind develops with this world. Those who focus primarily on the material aspects of this world and believe that they will remain in it forever tend to become neglectful of Allah (swt) and the hereafter. It is therefore important to change our perspective of this world and realize that our lives are not limited to it. We also need to comprehend that an everlasting abode awaits us after this life. The relationship between this world and the hereafter should be one of intent and means. Misguidance and deviation occurs when human beings put all of their focus, efforts, and worries solely on the life of this world.

1 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūsuf (12), Verse 53
2 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 70, P. 59

3. Shayṭān and external roots such as society, peer pressure, consumerism, government, etc.

Human beings ultimately have two choices: either to follow the path of Allah (swt), or to follow the Shayṭān. The Noble Qurʾān says that following Shayṭān is a worthless course for humankind: *"Did I not enjoin upon you, O children of Adam, that you not worship Shayṭān—[for] indeed, he is to you a clear enemy —and that you worship [only] Me? This is the straight path."* [3] The leading role of Shayṭān is to whisper to humankind via the forces that are within one's inner self (*nafs*). If we did not possess these forces within our inner selves, then Shayṭān would not have been able to influence us; and if we allow Shayṭān to control these forces, then we are also giving him the power (ability) to influence us. When we are overcome by a need to follow the desires of the inner self, then Shayṭān will make that desire attractive and encourage us to pursue it.

It is important to note that Shayṭān strives to cause human beings to be neglectful of Allah (swt) and to distance us from His remembrance. He also makes this world attractive and facilitates a fixation with materialistic things.

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Yāsīn (36), Verse 60

Tell Me About...Sins and Repentance is a textual compilation of Islamic questions and answers that are commonly asked by university students and relate to many of the issues that we face in society today. They have been addressed by a prominent Islamic scholar to give a holistic and spiritual answer to their concerns.

WORDSEARCH

Find the following terms in the word search:

R S B N O L M W V J H G U P C O U R A G E B Q A E
E X T K V Y J Z F P U B L O T Z E U I W M P C S I
P S C E S O S G X H A S A M E E N L V E F R U V R
I E T N A O N Y A W A I T E D L J N T H Y B D D C
S H R D K D K O S D R G J I K B C O A S M M E S H
U P W S F V F M K H E P B H C X P A H I F N E N M
P L O P E B Q A N T C I O N A E I H S A K Y M K D
P I L S L V X K S S P Q V T E R L S G M Q R V T O
L U P E B T E M P T O S E R E N I T Y N I C B W N
I V E T F E R R H Y N A D L D O N F J G L R E M S
C Q T P D U A L A C R E O M N E B O H Q M I O B R
A C A R P L S I B N V T S K L K D T B N T D N E Q
T O N D H A R L E D T B R S T B E W A S W B L K P
I M O G D M T E P Y F C P J D O P R E L T I W S X
O E I L P T F I T B A M E G U S E W R H E Y Q N H
N S S Y O Q A V E C H O K S F Y N P O F C L D B N
T D S F P O T H Y N E D N U O N D E C M N P T I O
G M A K N B I L W P C E K V B P E T H Q A M I N I
N U P G Q U M Y C M S E Q T N V N D S U I E V D T
B P M Z W D A K N S U R W Q A N C H S P L A W V A
C L O H I N H V L C A F V E J T E X E H E G N O L
L G C J U E F U J D U I J F M I A G N P R R J L E
J V E U B Y H T A P M E T W Y O K C E I W X D C V
M X Y B K L O M Y J D N U L F A I R N E S S F A E
E W O R S H I P D W O I E N K D B F O I S P E K R

- Steadfastness
- Patience
- Fairness
- Serenity
- Dependence
- Compassionate
- Revelation
- Submission
- Worship
- Relief
- Empathy
- Fāṭimah
- Supplication
- Righteousness
- Courage
- Justice
- Reliance
- Oneness
- Perseverant
- Awaited
- Freedom

Take some time today to reflect upon what the words mean to you. Do you find yourself relating to any of them?

Continued from Page 5

In fact, the *tasbīḥ* of Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) is the tasbīḥ of Allah (swt). It is perhaps the most powerful way that we can contemplate the greatness, praiseworthiness, and glory of Allah (swt).

Some of the benefits of the *tasbīḥ* include divine forgiveness, protection, and the prevention of misfortune:

- Allah (swt) forgives the one who performs the *tasbīḥ* with a sound heart. Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said, *"One who reads the tasbīḥ of Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) after an obligatory ṣalāh (prayer) and before moving his legs away from his position Allah (swt) forgives him, and he should begin with the Takbīr (Allāhu Akbar)."* [5]
- Additionally, Allah (swt) grants His protection to the one who performs the *tasbīḥ*. Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said, *"We ask our children to recite the tasbīḥ of Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa) just as we ask them to perform their ṣalāh. You should commit yourself to [reciting] this. No servant of Allah (swt) has committed to this tasbīḥ and [then] experienced misfortune (shiqāwah) in his life."* [6]
- Misfortune is repelled by those who perform the *tasbīḥ*. Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa) has said, *"Whoever recites tasbīḥ of Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa) and then asks for forgiveness, Allah (swt) will forgive him. What is said on the tongue is 100 words, but on the scale of the deeds, they are accepted as a thousand (words), since they repel Satan and please Allah (swt)."* [7]

All of creation, including the angels, the plants, and the rocks, perform the *tasbīḥ*. Words of glorification are also found throughout the verses of the Noble Qurʾān. These are, of course, words of glorification by Allah (swt) Himself. For example, *"So glorify Allah when you enter evening and when you rise at dawn."*[8] When we take the time to repeat *Allāhu Akbar* 34 times, followed by *alḥamdulillāh* 33 times, and finally *subḥānallāh* 33 times with intentionality and purpose, we are connecting ourselves with Allah(swt), the Ahlul Bayt (ʿa), and the entire universe. The power of the *tasbīḥ* is that it grants companionship in times of loneliness, contentment in times of grief, and perseverance in times of tribulation. Rely on the *tasbīḥ*, and it will act as your guardian angel.

5 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 3, Ḥadīth #6
6 *Al-Amālī lī aṣ-Ṣadūq*, P. 579, Ḥadīth #16
7 *Thawāb al-Aʿmāl*, P. 163
8 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Rūm (30), Verse 17

ETIQUETTES OF RECITING THE TASBĪḤ:

- Observe the correct number and sequence of words to derive spiritual benefit.
- Recite the tasbīḥ immediately after prayer, before engaging in anything else or changing one's posture.
- Maintain presence of heart by supplicating with consciousness and awareness.
- Recite the tasbīḥ without gaps, pauses, or interruptions.

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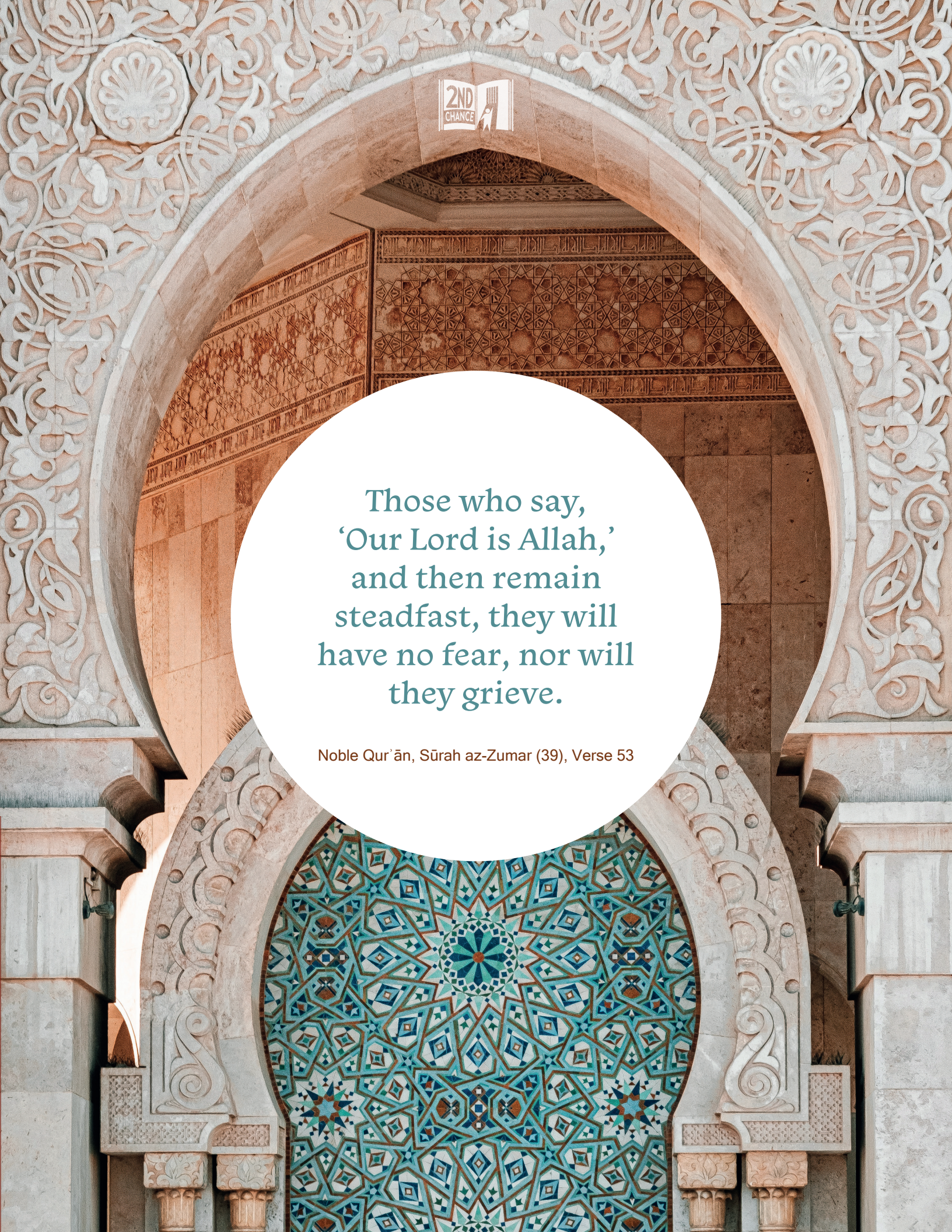

Those who say,
‘Our Lord is Allah,’
and then remain
steadfast, they will
have no fear, nor will
they grieve.

Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah az-Zumar (39), Verse 53

Transliteration Guide

Arabic terms in this magazine have been transliterated according to the following guidelines:

ء	a, i, or u (initial form)	ظ	ẓ
ء	’ (medial or final form)	ع	‘
ا	a	غ	gh
ب	b	ف	f
ت	t	ق	q
ث	th	ك	k
ج	j	ل	l
ح	ḥ	م	m
خ	j	ن	n
د	d	ه	h
ذ	dh	و	w
ر	r	ي	y
ز	z	ة	h (without iḍāfah)
س	s	ة	t (with iḍāfah)
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـِ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u

Glossary

Nafs: Inner self

Taslīm: Submission

Birr: Righteousness

Next Issue

A New Year, A New You?

A Look at Looking Forward